Council Highlights: June 2002

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of May and June 2002.

Board Chairs meet with Minister Cunningham

On May 15, 2002, the Chairs of Boards of Governors and the President of COU met with Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to discuss a broad range of issues including the throne speech commitment "that the government will build on previous commitments and provide further resources to postsecondary institutions to meet higher-than-expected student demand." This meeting is the second of its kind; on April 18, 2000, Minister Cunningham met with Board Chairs to discuss a number of items and to strengthen the collaborative working relations between the universities and the Ministry.

Update on secondary school issues

Throughout the period during which the new secondary school curriculum was developed and implemented, Ontario's universities worked closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to ensure that the program of studies would offer sound preparation for university-bound students and that no student's opportunity to attend university would be undermined by the transition from one program to the other. In a joint enterprise that is without precedent, university-subject specialists participated with other educators to review all courses that are designated as university preparation and university/ college preparation during the development phase of the new curriculum to confirm their academic integrity.

As the program reaches its full implementation, the universities continue to co-operate with the appropriate ministries to deal with the issues of treating secondary school graduates equitably, whatever their program. So far, the data available concerning student marks continue to indicate that the distribution of grades at the higher levels – for students with appropriate qualifications for university study – is essentially the same between courses in the old program and parallel courses in the new program. The two provincial ministries have promised to continue to monitor grades and to share this information with universities so that allowance can be made for any anomalies that may arise.

Results of University Applicant Survey expected in summer

This spring, COU partnered with Acumen Research Group to administer the 2002 University Applicant Survey (UAS) to a random sample of 20,000 first-year, direct-entry applicants to Ontario universities. A total of 7,200 applicants responded to the UAS, resulting in a high response rate of 36%. Ontario universities are on the brink of the greatest surge in applicant demand since the 1960s; for fall 2002, there has been a 16.3% increase in secondary school applicants and an 8.4% increase in non-secondary school applicants.

The UAS provides a potentially useful tool to generate information about not only the profile of applicants, but also the key influencers of student choice and the best ways to reach prospective applicants. Analysis of the results is underway, with findings expected by the beginning of August.

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board reviews proposals

The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology has recently submitted applied degree applications to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB); the proposals are posted

on PEQAB's web site (www.peqab.edu.gov.on.ca). Decisions by PEQAB and subsequently by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities are expected this summer. The Minister has accepted, to date, 12 applied degree proposals submitted by colleges. The COU Standing Committee on Relationships with Other Postsecondary Institutions continues to follow progress.

OPAS hosts 2002 Business Leaders' Forum

On April 19, 2002, the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) hosted its 2002 Business Leaders' Forum at the National Club in Toronto. This year's featured speaker was Don Drummond, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist for TD Bank Financial Group, who was introduced by Dr. Mordechai Rozanski, Chair of COU and President of the University of Guelph.

Nearly 100 invited guests from industry, the universities and government heard Mr. Drummond share his views on the Canadian economy as well as our need for further government and private-sector investment in postsecondary education to ensure that Canada remains competitive. Mr. Drummond pointed out that in Canada, from 1995 to 1998, expenditures per student fell 6%, whereas they rose for most of our competitors. Since 1980, real spending per student is down 30% in Canada, while during this same period funding rose 20% in the United States.

Following Mr. Drummond's remarks, Terry Mosey, President of Bell Ontario and OPAS Board Member, and Dr. Paul Davenport, Past Chair of COU and President of the University of Western Ontario, presented industry and university perspectives, respectively.

OPAS regularly presents forums for business leaders to ensure an exchange of information and views on important issues that effect both industry and the university community.

Funding update using jurisdictional comparisons in the works

COU is producing another important funding update that will be released by the end of June. *Funding for Ontario Universities: Jurisdictional Funding Comparisons* will illustrate how Ontario compares with all other provinces in terms of funding per full-time equivalent enrolment, per capita and personal income in the province. In the five years from 1996-97 to 2001-2002, provincial funding to Ontario universities increased 11.7% while state support for postsecondary education in the United States rose by 36.5%. Ontario is 56th out of 60 North American jurisdictions in terms of the *change* in funding over that period. A peer set of U.S. institutions received and spent approximately 30% more per student in 1999-2000 than all Ontario universities combined. Relative to the previous year, however, the situation in Ontario has improved – from being 38% and 34% below the U.S. comparisons with regard to revenue and expenses, respectively – due to higher tuition income and federal support levels.

Latest edition of Resource Document

The 2002 edition of the *Resource Document* provides, in summary form, analyses of statistics and trends related to Ontario universities across a range of policy areas including grants and revenue, comparisons with other sectors and jurisdictions, research, tuition fees, student financial assistance, university infrastructure, faculty and staff, and education and employment.

Some key findings are:

- Provincial operating grants per student, in real terms, decreased by 33% between 1987-88 and 2001-2002, while tuition fee revenue per student increased by 125%.
- Although provincial operating grants increased by $175 million over the 1997-98 to 2001-2002 period, in real terms they remain $610 million below their 1992-93 peak.
- Tuition fee revenue has increased by nearly $100 million per year over the last two years, largely due to deregulation of professional and graduate programs. Over the 1992-93 to

2001-2002 period, tuition fee revenue rose by $675 million in real terms.

- Full-time equivalent student to full-time faculty ratios deteriorated from 12% above the average of the other nine provinces in 1998-99 to an estimated 15% above in 1999-2000.

The *Resource Document* is expected to be released by July.

Nipissing University hosts year-end meeting of Council

Council members received a warm welcome from David Marshall, President of Nipissing University and host of the last meeting of Council for the academic year. In advance of the regular meetings comprising Council's two-day agenda, there were also opportunities for welcome relaxation, which rounded out the members' visit to North Bay. Special thanks go to David and all those from the Nipissing community for their hospitality. It is customary to hold one of each year's five regularly scheduled Council meetings at a member institution.

Farewells and new appointments to Council

Council bids farewell to five academic colleagues this academic season:

From Lakehead University, Dr. Laurie Garred of the Department of Chemical Engineering is leaving and will be succeeded by Dr. Birbal Singh of the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

- From McMaster University, Dr. Daniel Woolf, Dean of Humanities, is leaving. His successor has yet to be announced.

- From Ryerson University, Prof. Michael Miller of the Department of Architectural Science is leaving and will be succeeded by Prof. Don Snyder of the School of Image Arts.

- From the University of Western Ontario, Dr. David Bentley of the Department of English is leaving and will be succeeded by Prof. Kevin McQuillan of the Department of Sociology.

- From York University, Dr. Maurice Elliott of the Department of English is leaving. His successor has yet to be announced.

Secondment of COU's VP of Policy and Analysis winding down

Ken Snowdon, who has presided over COU's Research, Analysis and Policy Division and the Office of Health Sciences as Vice-President of Policy and Analysis for the last three years and a half years, will be completing his secondment in June 2002. Following a nine-month research leave, he will be returning to Queen's University, where he has held a number of positions over the years, most recently as Associate Vice-Principal (Planning) and Director of Resources Planning.

Under Ken's leadership, COU provided services of key importance to the university community – information gathering and policy research – supporting a range of advocacy and issues management initiatives in the realm of funding, quality, student assistance, enrolment, faculty renewal, physical infrastructure and health sciences. Prior to joining COU, Ken was on secondment at the Universities Branch of the then-Ministry of Education and Training, where he served as senior university advisor. Ken's knowledge and expertise, his professionalism and his commitment to postsecondary issues – in addition to his infectious laugh – were hallmarks of his stay at COU.

Jamie Mackay, who is currently Director of the Universities Branch at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and well known within the university sector as an expert in university funding and other issues, will assume the position of Vice-President of Policy and Analysis, effective August 1, 2002.